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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, April 28, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The questions have been piling up this week thick and fast. Seems to me I have queries here to answer on every subject -- from baking powder to babies.

Question No. 1 is about baking powder. A listener wants to know what "double action" baking powder is. Answer: Double action baking powders are those which contain 2 kinds of acid. One acid generally reacts with the soda in the baking powder while the batter is cold; the other reacts with heat -- that is, during the cooking of the batter. If you are interested in chemistry and want me to go into technical details, I can tell you that the acids generally combined in the tartrate baking powders are cream of tartar and tartaric acid, and those combined in the combination powders are usually calcium-acid-phosphate and sodium-alum-phosphate. If you want to know what acids you are getting in a certain brand of baking powder, read the label on the can.

Question No. 2 -- about baby clothes. Writes a listener: "Please tell me whether the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington gives out patterns for infants' clothes."

No, the Bureau neither gives nor sells patterns for any kind of clothes. But you can write the Bureau for a list of companies that sell patterns designed by the Bureau -- patterns both for infants and older children.

Third question. "Dear Aunt Sammy: Please tell me how to clean and freshen up a grass rug."

The directions I have for cleaning fiber and grass rugs are these: "Fiber and grass rugs and mattings should be swept with a soft brush and may occasionally be wiped with a slightly damp cloth, or they may be cleaned with a vacuum machine. Water is likely to discolor floor coverings of this kind so should be used sparingly if at all. When taken out of doors for more thorough cleaning, lay the rugs flat and sweep both sides. Don't beat or shake, or handle roughly."

So much for cleaning. Now about "freshening up", as this listener expresses it. I gather that she means restoring the color and freshness. Miss Margaret Furry of the Bureau of Home Economics gives me these helpful tips.

She says that after cleaning a grass rug, you can sometimes improve its appearance by brushing it over with a coat of varnish or shellac. She also says that a grass rug that will stand water without discoloring may improve in color by a sponging with a little ammonia in water.

Here is a question for the housewife who is careful of her food vocabulary. "What is the difference between buttermilk, clabber and sour milk?"

The foods people give the following definitions for these 3 kinds of fermented milk: "Buttermilk is the product that remains after the fat has been removed from milk or cream, sweet or sour, in the process of churning. Buttermilk contains not less than 3.5 percent of milk solids that are not fat. Clabber is milk in which souring has advanced to the stage of marked precipitation of the curd but not to the point of separation of the whey. (In other words, clabber is fresh thick sour milk.) Finally, sour milk is milk soured naturally by the action of lactic acid bacteria, or by the addition of vinegar or lemon juice."

Here are two questions about birds.

The first one comes from a lady who signs herself "Bird Lover." She asks whether it is true that the Federal Government prohibits people from bringing skylarks into the United States.

That is quite true. The Government absolutely prohibits importing skylarks and will not issue permits for their importation under any circumstances. This is because the biologists who know the ways of birds report that the skylark would be injurious to agriculture in this country.

The skylark may be a "blithe spirit" in English poetry but in American agriculture it is an undesirable alien. Instructions to that effect were recently issued to customs officials. Other birds listed as injurious to agriculture and horticulture are: the common or house myna, European bullfinch, European yellowhammer, greenfinch and chaffinch.

But don't let's spend too much time stressing the villains of this world. I'd much rather tell you about some of the good citizens among our native birds. I should much rather answer the lady who complains each spring that we should do away with the robins in this country because of the way they nibble at her cherries.

I am sending this lady a bulletin called "Some Common Birds Useful to the Farmer," and I refer her to page 3 which tells in great detail just what robins do eat. A few cherries to be sure. Who would deny them that treat in repayment for the vast quantity of harmful insects which they consumer during the year? Biologists at the Department of Agriculture have examined the contents of 1236 robins' stomachs and find that 42 percent of the food is animal matter -- principally insects.

If you are interested in knowing which birds are your friends and are of real economic value to the country, send for a copy of this bulletin. Write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., and ask for "Some Common Birds Useful to the Farmer" -- Farmers' Bulletin No. 630.

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